[Smt. Lakshmi Panabaka]

The State Government had to share 25 per cent of the project cost as per norms under submission projects. All these proposals are still pending with the Central Government. 2586 habitations in Cuddapah district, 342 rural habitations in Chittoor district and 178 brackish water affected habitations in Sullurpet area of Nellore district are deprived of the drinking water from a long period.

I, therefore, request the Union Government to clear the above proposals and provide funds for their implementation.

(iv) Need to take steps to protect Sankosh and Gangadhar river basins from going dry in Assam

SHRI BIJOY HANDIQUE (Jorhat) : It is a matter of concern that the entire area of the Sankosh and the Gangadhar river basins in Assam is in danger of going dry due to proposed Sankosh River Multipurpose Project in Bhutan. And the situation is being further aggravated due to the proposed diversion of 13,000 cusecs of water from the Sankosh to Farakka to augment the committed water supply to Bangladesh under the Indo-Bangla Treaty. Thus a 143 km. canal will be dug from the Bhutan point of the river to the Teesta barrage. The treaty with Bangladesh and agreement with Bhutan, no doubt, deserves the nation's support. But while working it out, planning has been done in a haphazard and irrational way. The proposal to supply Sankosh water to Farakka, an old proposal, has been protested by experts during the last fifteen years. And even the agreement on Sankosh Hydro-Electrical Project signed between India and Bhutan in March 1996 was under consideration since early 80s. An assurance given by the Government on 25th August, 1983 that the threat to the Manas eco-system and particularly to the flora and fauna of the entire area by the proposed dams on Sankosh and Manas rivers which were then only in the investigation stage would be examined, was not honoured.

And now the proposed Sankosh River Multipurpose Project will not only be an ecological disaster to Manas National Park in Assam but also to Buxa tiger reserves, Jaidapara Sanctuary, Gafumara national park and several forest areas in the district of Jalpaiguri in West Bengal but also will cause an agricultural havoc by turning several areas in Dhubri and Kokrazhar districts of Assam and eastern Coochbehar and other adjacent areas of West Bengal into a stretch of more barren land.

I request the Union Government to rethink on both these proposals.

13.40 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

(v) Need to provide funds to the State Government of Bihar for Industrial development of Aurangabad district

[Translation]

SHRI VIRENDRA KUMAR SINGH (Aurangabad) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Aurangabad district of Bihar State is the most backward district of a backward State. The people of this district are migrating to other places due to prevailing unemployment and starvation.

No industry has been set up in Aurangabad. There is no other source of employment and pace of development is slowing down, instead of picking up. The per capita income of the people is decreasing. After acquiring the land under Industrial Growth Centre Scheme in Aurangabad, though fencing has been done but no effort is being made to set up any industry there till date.

Therefore, I request the Central Government to allocate requisite funds to the State Government for providing financial assistance to Aurangabad Growth Centre so that more and more industries may be established in this area as soon as possible.

(vi) Need to provide more facilities to Khadi and Village Industries

[English]

SHRI T. GOVINDAN (Kasargoda) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I would like to invite the attention of the Government, especially the Minister of Industry towards the pathetic condition of the village Industry of Khadi. Last year, the Government reduced the rebate from 15 per cent to ten per cent and had completely withdrawn Government purchase and the rebate on poly-vastra was totally abolished. This had a disastrous effect on Khadi sale which decreased by more than Rs. 50 crore, resulting in a loss of employment to 80,000 artisans. Khadi institutions work on a 'no loss, no profit' basis. As they follow Gandhian philosophy, they are not allowed to create capital. The production and sale of Khadi is essential.

In this golden jubilee year of our Independence, Khadi industry and millions of poor Khadi workers, mainly women are suffering from unemployment and lower wages. Only Government assistance can save this village industry from ruin. The Government should see the potential of these village industries to provide employment to lakhs of village people, mainly women.

I request the Union Government to look into the following demands of this village industry.

(1) Restoration of rebate at the level before 1995.

(2) The special rebate of 15 per cent should be in addition to the normal rebate of ten per cent.